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Input from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean to the high-level political forum on sustainable development

Note by the Secretariat

The Secretariat hereby transmits the input from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean to the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

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I. Thirtieth session of the Committee of the Whole

1. The thirtieth session of the Committee of the Whole of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean was held in New York on 19 and 20 March 2015. It was convened by the Executive Secretary of the Commission and chaired by Peru, pursuant to resolution 687 (XXXV). Representatives of the following States members of the Commission attended the session: Argentina, Barbados, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, France, Germany, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Italy, Mexico, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Spain, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, United States of America, Uruguay and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of). Also attending were representatives of the following associate members of the Commission: Martinique and Saint Maarten.

2. The Secretariat was represented by representatives of the Regional Commissions New York Office, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Executive Office of the Secretary-General. The following United Nations entities were represented: United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Development Programme and United Nations Environment Programme. Representatives of the following specialized agencies of the United Nations also attended the session: International Labour Organization, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and United Nations Industrial Development Organization. Intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations were also represented. At the thirty-fifth session of the Commission, held in Lima from 5 to 9 May 2014, Peru was elected as Chair of the thirtieth session of the Committee of the Whole, El Salvador, Jamaica and Mexico as Vice-Chairs and Ecuador as Rapporteur.

3. Regarding the role of a Latin American and Caribbean forum on sustainable development and its linkages with the high-level political forum on sustainable development, the Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations stated that a regional forum on sustainable development should constitute an important regional platform for monitoring and reviewing the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. It would offer opportunities to redesign forms of international cooperation and create a new architecture of regional participation, including broad participation by civil society. The forum had played an important role in the preparatory process for the third International Conference on Financing for Development and the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda. He recalled that the regional consultations on financing for development in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Santiago on 12 and 13 March 2015, had demonstrated extensive convergence between the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States and the Commission, which reaffirmed the need for the inclusion of proposals by regional forums in the post-2015 development agenda. He recalled the support given by the Latin American and Caribbean countries for the proposal of the Open Working Group of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals and

pointed to the need to integrate the regional perspective with national histories and realities when defining the indicators for measuring the sustainable development goals. The preparation of those indicators would take some time, however, and would require regional debate. The Commission could assume responsibility for assessing the institutional and financial capacities of the region's countries, in all their diversity, which included developing countries, landlocked countries, small island developing States and middle-income countries. In that sense, the Commission's proposal of a structural gap approach, which went beyond the measurement of gross domestic product, was a step in the right direction. At the same time, it was important to maintain a comparative global perspective. Although Latin America and the Caribbean was still the world's most unequal region, for example, it was also the region in which inequality had diminished the most. He emphasized that a globally applicable agenda would require proper coordination at the national, regional and global levels and observed that the third International Conference on Financing for Development represented an opportunity to find long-term solutions to the budgetary pressure faced by the Caribbean countries. He concluded that the bodies and organizations of the United Nations system would need to be better prepared to rise to the challenge of implementing a universal programme and noted that several United Nations agencies, including the United Nations Development Programme, had been conceived on the basis of a North-South paradigm and lacked offices in developed countries.

4. The Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations, speaking in her capacity as Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council, remarked on the work programme of the high-level political forum on sustainable development and said that the General Assembly had established annual meetings of the forum from 2016 in order to monitor the progress of sustainable development commitments, including the means of implementation. The Council had been strengthened by Assembly resolution 69/214, in which the Assembly had stipulated that the meetings of the forum would be held under the auspices of the Council. She added that the forum should take into account the outcomes of intergovernmental negotiations towards the post-2015 development agenda and that it was essential to determine how the forum and the United Nations system would continue to work, with regard to that agenda, and how the forum would organize its review process to include the contributions of major groups. She highlighted that, in its resolution 67/290, the Assembly had acknowledged the importance of the regional dimension of sustainable development and that regional sustainable development forums, convened annually, should submit inputs to the forum. She mentioned that the development plans of Colombia already included sustainable development goals.

5. In the ensuing discussion, representatives agreed upon the importance of a regional forum as a dynamic platform for ongoing dialogue with an action-oriented agenda. They underscored the need to avoid the duplication of efforts and to step up coordination with the high-level political forum, to facilitate an information flow that would provide countries with the flexibility to define sustainable development processes at the national level. Regional input was fundamental to global sustainable development, and in that respect the Commission could play a prominent intermediary role at both levels. A representative from the Caribbean, describing the current situation in the subregion, said that discussions on sustainable development must focus on promoting well-being, giving greater independence to States and resolving capacity-building problems, which sometimes even prevented

representatives from attending international meetings owing to a lack of funds. Another representative stressed the need to carry out monitoring at the regional rather than the global level, given that Latin America and the Caribbean already had many functioning mechanisms and institutions in that regard.

6. Representatives underscored the need for the post-2015 development agenda to adequately reflect the regional perspective, expressing support for regional indicators. National follow-up could be included at the international level, using existing channels, whereas regional forums could be a space for dialogue on challenges and opportunities for collaboration, a role in which the Commission had a wealth of experience.

7. Statements were also made by the representatives of seven major groups, who stated that citizen participation was crucial to the success of the post-2015 development agenda. Access to decision-making should be available to all, and even children should have the ability to hold Governments accountable. Representatives stated that young people, as part of civil society, made an essential contribution to environmental sustainability and economic growth in the region. Young people should be included in any strategy for the implementation of those two aspects of development and mechanisms would be required to prepare them to participate in those processes and to assist Governments in engaging with young people.

8. A draft resolution on a forum of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on sustainable Development, submitted by Peru in its capacity as Chair of the Committee of the Whole, was presented during the session. It was decided to convene an extraordinary session of the Committee in order to consider further the draft resolution and to continue holding informal consultations with representatives of the States members of the Commission at United Nations Headquarters (see resolution 694 (PLEN.30)).

II. Sixteenth extraordinary session of the Committee of the Whole

9. The sixteenth extraordinary session of the Committee of the Whole of the Commission was held in Santiago on 16 April 2015. It was convened by the Executive Secretary of the Commission pursuant to the above-mentioned resolution 694 (PLEN.30). The session was chaired by the representative of Peru.

10. The session was attended by representatives of the following States members of the Commission: Argentina, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, France, Germany, Guatemala, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Portugal, Spain, Uruguay and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of). The British Virgin Islands, an associate member, was also represented.

11. The representatives considered a draft resolution on a forum of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on sustainable development, as described above, which was adopted by acclamation (see resolution 695 (PLEN.16-E). The representatives agreed on the need to launch the regional consultation process as soon as possible.

12. In closing, the Executive Secretary took note of three priorities that the delegations had raised for discussion in the regional consultation process: coherence between a regional forum and the high-level political forum on sustainable development, participation of Latin American and Caribbean countries and modalities for the participation of other stakeholders.

III. Resolutions

A. Resolution 694 (PLEN.30)

Forum of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on sustainable development

13. The Committee decided to convene an extraordinary session, to be held at the headquarters of the Commission in Santiago on 16 April 2015, in order to consider further a draft resolution on the forum of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on sustainable development and requested the secretariat to include with the letter convening the extraordinary session any information that might facilitate the consideration of the draft resolution.

14. The Committee decided to continue holding informal consultations with representatives of the States members of the Commission at United Nations Headquarters.

B. Resolution 695 (PLEN.16-E)

Forum of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on sustainable development

15. The Committee decided to launch a regional consultation process aimed at establishing a forum of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on sustainable development at the thirty-sixth session of the Commission in 2016. The Committee also decided that the regional consultation process would define the mandate, structure, operational modalities and expected outcomes of the forum, taking into account the outcome of the intergovernmental process on the post-2015 development agenda and in accordance with the priorities and mechanisms related to sustainable development established by the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States. The following issues related, inter alia, to the proposed regional forum, should be defined at the regional consultation process: modalities for the participation of other relevant stakeholders, relation of the forum to other regional cooperation and coordination mechanisms and schemes related to the post-2015 development agenda, contribution to development and national capacity-building for the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda, including through South-South cooperation, measurement tools for the achievement of the post-2015 development agenda, including through regional indicators, and budgetary implications.

16. The Committee requested the Executive Secretary to issue by December 2015 a report with recommendations on the issues to be defined at the regional consultation process.